

ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

October 3, 2002

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PUBLIC MEETING SET TO DISCUSS BACTERIA LEVELS AT BEED'S LAKE

DES MOINES — A public meeting to discuss bacteria levels at Beed's Lake will be held Oct. 9 at 7 p.m. at the First National Bank of Hampton in Hampton.

State officials representing the DNR, University of Iowa Hygienic Laboratory and the Iowa Department of Public Health will be in attendance. The purpose of the meeting is to help identify possible bacterial sources at the beach at Beed's Lake and to develop an individual, specialized plan to address the high levels. Similar meetings have been held to discuss high bacteria levels at Lake Darling and Rock Creek Lake.

All interested citizens are encouraged to attend the meeting.

In accordance with state policy, beaches that exceed U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines for fecal coliform bacteria over a 30-day period of time are posted with signs that read "Swimming Not Recommended." The beach at Beed's Lake had a swimming advisory posted for five consecutive weeks this summer, from mid-August through mid-September.

Beed's Lake State Park has provided visitors with a variety of recreational opportunities since 1934.

To access weekly bacteria test results, visit the Parks, Recreation and Preserves Web site at www.state.ia.us/dnr/beach2002.htm.

For more information, contact Boekhoff at (319) 335-1574 or Stefanie Forret at (515) 281-3150.

DNR, ALLIANT ENERGY BEGIN COAL TAR CLEANUP IN MARSHALLTOWN

MARSHALLTOWN — Alliant Energy, under supervision of the DNR, began cleanup Thursday of contaminated soil at the former Marshalltown Manufactured Gas Plant in a project that will close out an era of the city's history.

The project will focus on the removal of about 18,000 tons of coal tar and coal tar-contaminated soils from the site, located at 501 East Nevada Street. During the next several months, coal tar will be removed from buried tanks and contaminated soils around these tanks and other disposal areas will be excavated. The project is expected to last into next year, after which Alliant Energy plans to redevelop the site by expanding the nearby electrical substation.

"This is one of 50 manufactured gas plant sites around Iowa that we have been working to clean up," said Mick Leat, a DNR environmental engineer who is helping with project oversight. "Iowans derived a lot of benefit from manufactured gas, and now it's time to restore these sites."

Over the years, the site has been used for both electric generation and gas production, but this cleanup is being performed to address contamination originating at the gas works, which operated at the site from the 1870s to the 1940s. Several companies that owned or operated the plant, including Iowa Railway and Light Company, a predecessor company to Alliant Energy, manufactured gas at the plant from coal and petroleum.

In the gas manufacturing process, coal was "baked" to the point where volatile gases were given off. These gases were collected in tanks and piped to residents and businesses for lights, stoves, water heaters and other uses.

As the gas cooled, coal tar liquids condensed out of the gas stream and were collected. Depending on the local economic conditions at the time, the tars were either sold or disposed of as waste. The buried coal tar presents an environmental concern because it can present health concerns to people coming in contact with contaminated soils or drinking contaminated groundwater.

Leat said that despite the negative effects of coal tar that were unknown at the time, the manufactured gas process represented an important phase of Iowa's industrial heritage.

"After the Civil War, manufactured gas played an important role in the industrial expansion of the United States," Leat said. "Businesses and citizens used it the way we use natural gas today."

According to company records, the Marshalltown plant was one of the largest in the state, producing more than 76 million standard cubic feet of gas in 1920 while supplying gas to more than 50 towns in the area.

Under DNR oversight, Alliant Energy will collect air, water and soil samples during the project to monitor and insure public safety. After removal, the contaminated soils and coal tar will be shipped by truck to a plant in Cedar Rapids for thermal treatment. At that point, the clean soil can be used as general fill or for landfill alternative daily cover.

For more information, contact Mick Leat at (515) 281-8045, or by e-mail at Mick.Leat@dnr.state.ia.us.

PRAIRIE WORK DAY OCT. 5 IN WESTERN IOWA

DES MOINES — The Nature Conservancy is sponsoring a work day Oct. 5 at Vincent Bluff Prairie Preserve, located in the heart of Council Bluffs on the scenic Loess Hill range located west of the Mall of the Bluffs and East of Harry Langon Boulevard (old Highway 375). In order to enter the property, simply drive to either the end heading north of Thallas Street or Lockwood Place Street.

The workday will be from 9 a.m. to noon. Participants will be cutting invasive shrubs and trees, possibly picking seed and performing other tasks as needed. Volunteers should bring gloves and wear long pants and layered clothing for the weather. In the event of rain, volunteers should call (402) 561-9422 by 8 a.m. on Saturday morning to see if the workday is cancelled.

For more information contact Diane Ford-Shivvers, Keepers of the Land Volunteer Program, (515) 281-0878, or visit www.keepersoftheland.org.

FALL PRAIRIE RESCUE DAY SCHEDULED

DES MOINES — Volunteers are invited to join the Polk County Conservation Board, Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge, the Nature Conservancy, the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, DNR Keepers of the Land and AmeriCorps program members in the first Fall Prairie Rescue Day.

This project is a continuation of the Spring Prairie Rescue Day, now in its third year. Volunteers are encouraged to come to one of four Prairie Rescue sites to help restore some of Iowa's native landscape and learn about our natural heritage.

Prairie Rescue Day will be Saturday, Oct. 19. Participants are needed to help clear woody and invasive species, burn grasses and collect prairie seeds. The four Fall Prairie Day sites are Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt (Polk County), Rock Creek State Park (NE Jasper County), Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge (SW Jasper County) and Hayden Prairie State Preserve (Howard County).

Volunteers are encouraged to bring work gloves, boots, lopping shears or bow saws if you have them, water, and appropriate clothing for variable weather. A limited number of tools will be provided at each site.

Directions to meeting sites, 9 a.m.:

Chichaqua Bottoms Greenbelt-Corner of NE 112th NE 102nd Ave — Get off I-80 at the Mitchellville Exit. Head north three miles north of I-80. You will cross the Skunk River. A quarter-mile beyond is a field for parking (left side of road).

Rock Creek State Park-Beach Area — Get off I-80 at the IA-224 exit toward Kellogg/Sully (exit 173). Stay straight on 224 for about five miles. Turn right on CR-F27. The first blacktop road to your right will take you to the beach area. Coming from Grinnell, take US 6 to T38. Right on T28 leads to F27. Take a left. Look for the park sign and then signs for the beach.

Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge — Prairie Learning Center Parking Lot:

From Des Moines: Take Hwy 163 to exit 18. Follow signs along newly paved entrance road

From I-80: Take the Colfax/Prairie City exit. Turn south on Hwy 117 toward Prairie City. Continue through Prairie City and across the Hwy 163 bridge to the refuge entrance road.

Hayden Prairie State Preserve — From the intersection of Hwy 9 and CR-V58 in Cresco, drive west on Hwy 3 for 13 miles to Jade Avenue (V26). Turn north (right) and go five miles to 50th St (A23). Turn west (left) and go one-quarter mile to the preserve parking area on the south side of the road. Look for the sign.

For more information, contact Diane Ford-Shivvers, DNR Volunteer Coordinator, (515) 281-0878, or by e-mail at diane.ford-shivvers@dnr.state.ia.us; David Peterson, DNR Assistant Volunteer Coordinator (515) 281-4539; or visit www.keepersoftheland.org .